

THE
FIRST
GENOCIDE

THE FIRST GENOCIDE

(A Play in Four Acts)

by

H. H. HAIG

“Such evil deeds should our sons ever forget,
May the entire world heap insults on Armenian heads!”

—A. Abaronian

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DEDICATED
TO
THE MEMORY OF MY PARENTS
AND
ARMENIAN CILICIA

Fiat Justitia, Ruat Caelum

Fortes Fortuna Juvat.

Dis Aliter Visum.

Dum Spiro, Spero.

[Let justice be done though the heavens fall.

Fortune favors the brave.

The gods have deemed otherwise.

While I breathe, I hope.]



Note: In the instance of certain geographic particulars, various dates and some words in the passages quoted modifications or changes have been made in the interests of coherence and effectiveness.

THE AUTHOR

A TRIAL OF ORTHODOXY

By William Watson

The clinging children at their mother's knee
Slain; and the sire and kindred one by one
Flayed or hewn piecemeal; and things nameless done,
Not to be told: while imperturbably
The nations gaze, where Rhine unto the sea,
Where Seine and Danube, Thames and Tiber run,
And where great armies glitter in the sun,
And great Kings rule, and man is boasted free!
What wonder if yon torn and naked throng
Should doubt a Heaven that seems to wink and nod,
And having mourned at noontide, "Lord, how long?"
Should cry, "Where hidest Thou?" at evenfall,
At midnight, "Is He deaf and blind, our God?"
And ere day dawn, "Is He indeed at all?"

(From the "Lake of Van")

Comes there a day, comes there a season that
Shall hail a flag on topmost Ararat,
Calling Armenians, wheresoe'er they roam,
To seek once more their loved and beauteous home.

RAFFI

"I desire to see mine Cilicia—
The country that gave life to me!"

THE
FIRST
GENOCIDE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PRINCESS NVART	— School teacher, Mrs. Vartanian, about 45.
ARA	— Her son, about 12.
PRIEST KRIKOR	— Nvart's father-in-law, in his late 60's
HASMIG	— Krikor's wife, 65.
SMPAD	— Their son, 17.
MINAS	— A neighbor, man in his late 30's.
DR. KALOUSTE	— A physician, about 70 years old.
PROF. LEVON LEVONIAN	— About 55 years old, an accomplished pianist.
ABBESS TAKOUEHI	— 55 years old.
ARMENIAN SCHOOL CHILDREN	— 10-12 years old.
RUPEN SARKISSIAN	— 18, who is in love with
ZVART LOUSINIAN	— 16 years old.
BISHOP BARTHOLO- MEW	— Of Fernouze and Zeytoune in Cilicia, 45.
PRINCE SOURENIAN	— In his early 50's.
SIX ZEYTOUNTZIS	— In their prime.
THREE TURKISH RUFFIANS	— In their 30's; in gendarmes' uniforms.
SEVERAL TURKISH OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS	
THE VOICE	— A man's well-modulated voice.

The entire action takes place in St. Isabel's Armenian convent on Cyprus, not far from the principal city, in the months of April and May, 1945, excepting the locales of the dreams, which are in Marash and Zeytoune, in Cilicia.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

A garden adjoining a schoolhouse which is overshadowed by a church in the classic Armenian tradition. It is the first week in April. Time is 11 o'clock a.m.

SCENE II

One o'clock the same afternoon. The professor witnesses recitations and a song-fest by the eighth grade pupils, in preparation for the commencement exercises.

SCENE III

A surprise dinner for the Princess and the Professor at six o'clock the same evening in the garden.

ACT TWO

SCENE I

Several days later. Ten o'clock in the morning on a Saturday. The Princess' bedroom.

SCENE II

Easter morn. The Princess' bedroom.

SCENE III

Several days later. The garden. In the afternoon. War is over.

ACT THREE

SCENE I

Two weeks later. Abbess Takouhi's office, seven-thirty o'clock p.m.

SCENE II

Half an hour later. The Princess' bedroom.

SCENE III

Same night. A dream.

SCENE IV

Same night. Another dream.

SCENE V

Same night. Still another dream.

ACT FOUR

SCENE I

Several days later. The Princess' bedroom.

SCENE II

About a week later. The garden.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

SCENE—A garden overshadowed, to the right, by a convent and church, the architecture of which is in the classic Armenian tradition. A small iron door with circular top is in center, right; it provides access to the courtyard of the convent. In the center of the stage there is a spouting fountain and a basin for same. To the rear of it there are a circular table and several chairs. The garden contains a variety of flower beds, neatly arranged. An ornamental iron fence in the rear and left, and across the front of the stage, encloses the garden. On right, extended grapevines serve as a “canopy” along the wall. On the left, is shown a meadow with a few trees. A road runs through it. A door and a path from the garden connects to it. In the rear are shown the blue waters of the Mediterranean in the distance. In the far rear, in the horizon, can be seen the Cilician mountain peaks.

AT RISE—A good-looking precocious youth in his late 'teens, dressed in sport shirt and slacks and sandals, is in the right rear corner of the garden, facing the rear of the stage; he is tossing a coin into the air and catching it. Several seconds later a pretty but shy girl enters the garden through the open door from the convent, with garden implements, headed for the basin, to fill the watering pail.

RUPEN: Head, she will say “yes!”—tail, she will say “yes!” Tail, she will say “yes!”—head, she will say “yes!” (He keeps repeating these words several times, and pauses for a few seconds.) (*In a loud voice*) Pazé, where are you? (*A spirited dog appears, wagging his tail furiously.*) Here you are! (*During the course of the play the dog may appear again, as the Director sees fit.*)

ZVART: (*occupied filling the pail*)

RUPEN: (*tossing the coin up again*) Head, she will say "yes!"—tail. . . .

ZVART: (*making her presence known*) What are *you* doing here, Rupen, at this time of the day?

RUPEN: (*somewhat surprised*) I, my dear, have an important mission—a project, you might call it—to accomplish. Indeed, two distinct projects!

ZVART: And what may their nature be?

RUPEN: (*now close by, by the basin*) Shhhh! It's war time! The Island is filled with spies!

ZVART: (*somewhat disturbed*) What are you *talking* about?

RUPEN: Well, with your permission, let me be brief and to the point. For the first time since the war started, the Armenian Education Union has sent a new General Superintendent to inspect the schools here on the Island. He is in the convent right now! Well, I want to meet him, and kind of size him up, you see?

ZVART: Nosy, aren't you?

RUPEN: "Curious" is the correct word, my dear. Nor is that quality an exclusive characteristic of the female of the species, if I may say so.

ZVART: Don't "dear me," please. Furthermore, my parents object to your seeing me, may I add—for the umpteenth time?

RUPEN: (*nonchalantly*). I deem it hardly necessary, my dear, to reveal my second—foremost—project. For the Nth time!

ZVART: I must go back in now.

RUPEN: One moment, please! May I recapitulate, once more, then? You are too young—yet. That is, of course, according to your parents. That I am too shallow here and here (*points to his head and his wallet*). Unsettled. Silly—or foolish. Take your choice. That I should go to the United States after the war, to get a college education, according to my parents. And only *then* think of marriage. Admitting that I am less than profound intellectually (*points to his head*), a college education would be wasted—along with my father's hard-earned cash—on me. Furthermore, I have no interest in nuts and bolts and slide rules;

meters and motors and electromagnetic waves. And electronics too. Not to forget Planck's constant, and Einstein's relativity theory. Too deep for me! I am interested in practical and useful things, like multiplication and division tables and penmanship, and book-keeping and such, in which subject I majored at Junior Hi. The Princess would surely verify these statements! (*Aside to himself*). With such extensive holdings, the Convent will surely need a competent accountant, after my father is gone! (*Turning back to Zvart*) And I am pleased with *your* education—you graduated from grammar school. That is enough for a girl. Now the important question: You know I love you truly, my dearest Zvart: Will you marry me?

ZVART: You confuse me again. . . . Well, I don't hate you—(*footsteps are heard: a well but conservatively dressed man with a black derby enters the garden, a brief case in one hand and what seems like a small traveler's baggage in the other*).

PROF. LEVONIAN: I do hope I am not interfering. . . .

RUPEN: Not at all, Sir: I was looking forward to the pleasure of meeting with you.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Then you knew?

RUPEN: Of course, Sir. . . . May I present myself, Baron* Levonian: I am Rupen—easy to remember when you connote the name with that of Prince Rupen, the founder of Armenian Cilicia—I am Rupen Sarkissian. May I present you to a —well—a good friend, Miss Zvart Lousinian, this is Baron Levonian.

ZVART: I am glad to make your acquaintance, Sir.

PROF. LEVONIAN: The pleasure is all mine, I am sure. Let me rest my weary feet for a moment.

RUPEN: (*now they are seated around the table*). Baron Levonian, I understand you come from Beirut—I was born there . . . Zvart was born in Aleppo. Her folks are natives of Gaban: mine are from Hadjin. . . . (*He points to the mountain peaks in the background*).

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*with his index finger towards the moun-*

* Baron — a title of courtesy commonly used among the Armenians.

tains). And I was born in Marash. I can see we are one big family... But, well, business before pleasure, I always say. Rupen, will you do me a favor?

RUPEN: (*standing up and assuming a posture of military attention*). Anything you say, Sir.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Will you convey this message to Mrs. Vartanian, please: I wish to pay her class an unannounced visit at 1 p.m. after lunch, if it is all right with her. I shall enter the classroom thru the rear door, and watch the class at work for a while.

RUPEN: With pleasure, Sir. Mrs. Vartanian — we call her the Princess, Baron Levonian. No doubt you would like to know that she is the daughter of one of the four Princes of Zeytoune: Prince Sourenian's daughter! The Princess. . . Right away, Sir (*he departs*).

ZVART: I adore her, Baron Levonian; she was my teacher as well as Rupen's. She always taught eighth grade. I adore her, but can't understand her. So beautiful, so sweet, and so sad! I wish I knew her life story. It can't but be very very interesting.

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*the names are familiar to him and electrify him*). Perhaps I shall have the double pleasure of finding a long-lost friend!

ZVART: She is wonderful! I only wish I could read her beautiful black penetrating sad eyes! But, of course, our relationship with her has been only that of teacher and pupil. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Maybe some day you will know her better. I only wish that the knowledge may make you a fuller and happier young woman.

ZVART: Thank you, Sir; you are very kind.

PROF. LEVONIAN: I had been looking forward to this trip for a long time. Apparently my anticipations will be fully gratified; so far I am well pleased with the prospects. There may even be some entirely unexpected and extremely welcome new developments. . . .

RUPEN: (*he is heard returning, as he plays the tune of "Cilicia" on the harmonica*). Well, Sir, she said: "As the General Superintendent desires."

RUPEN: (*hesitatingly*). Well, Sir, a bit of warning, if I may. I do not know how to put this. About the Princess. She, well, she is sometimes queer, maybe moody, I should have said; or aloof, perhaps, is the correct word. Or again, she may be a woman of mysteries—a mysterious woman!

PROF. LEVONIAN: Do you mean a woman of secrets? And of memories, perhaps?

RUPEN: (Zvart nodding her head in approval). Yes, yes, that is what we mean—and do not understand.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Young people, you will perhaps comprehend the meaning of her moodiness some day.

RUPEN: Ever since she came to the Island, she has been locked up in her room. Occasionally one sees her here in the garden, or at church.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Well, Rupen and Zvart, duty calls; I must now leave you. Thanks for everything—and for your advice (*he leaves*).

RUPEN: Eureka! Eureka!

ZVART: (*amused*). What now?

RUPEN: Eureka, Eureka! This has been a most pleasant and productive interlude . . . It came to me like a flash! Prof. Levonian has been to America. I shall ask his advice. And the Princess' son Ara is an important scientist in the United States. After the war is over—soon, I hope—when she goes there to meet her son, as she plans, I shall also await her suggestions eagerly. If they both advise me against further study, then will you marry me this year?

ZVART: That looks like a sensible approach and decision.

RUPEN: A kiss—our first—and promise? (*They kiss. Rupen, feeling something in his shirt pocket*). Eureka! I forgot to deliver Mr. Torrossian's loveletter to the Princess! And what an opportunity that was! I am getting to be like an absent-minded professor. And at this age! IT MUST BE LOVE!

ZVART: But you spoiled our kiss!

CURTAIN

SCENE II

SCENE *A neat little classroom, with desks for about 25 pupils. The walls are painted white. On the rear wall, to the left, is seen a large picture of Saints Sabag and Mesrob, depicting their vision at night which led to the invention of the Armenian alphabet, which is clearly seen on a tablet. Underneath is given the date 404 A.D. The corresponding side, to the right, the wall is covered with a black curtain. The rear of the room, where the teacher's desk and chair are placed, is a platform about eight inches high. There is a small book case under the picture, at rear. Other pictures of famous Armenian religious and lay and military leaders, such as Patriarch Haigh, Gen. Vartan Memigonian, the priest Ghevont, Neres the Graceful, etc., are neatly arranged on the walls, as well as paintings of famous Armenian churches and monasteries. There are doors on the left, rear, and right, and front, left; a chair is nearby. There are windows on both sides. The room is well lit.*

AT RISE *During this scene, the teacher calls on several boys and girls in succession by name to recite certain poems. The pupils, later, are seen on the platform, rear, facing the audience, and singing Armenian songs, as part of preparation for commencement exercises. The teacher faces them, conducting. During the course of the song-fest, the teacher stops the group several times, calls certain pupils by name, to criticize their technique of singing, facial expressions, pronunciation of words, etc. The songs they sing include: Im Chinari Yare, Alakyaz, Sarn Ambel A, Kele, Kele, Ice Kisher Louyse Desa, Arde Pambag Tzaretzi, etc. The last one, Gouzhn Ara, Yela Sare is presented as a sketch. For this song, a canvas providing background scenery is put into place. Lights are turned off, and colored spotlights are used instead. At his discretion, the Director may include several Armenian dances during the course of this scene. About 30 seconds after the curtain rise, PROF. LEVONIAN enters thru the rear door, and sits on the chair provided for him. During this scene, he takes several notes. During the course of this practice, MRS. VARTANIAN and*

PROF. LEVONIAN recognize each other. Each thinks how the other has changed, after a lapse of many years. Memories of by-gone days stir in their breasts.

A BOY RECITES:

“When the God of Liberty
Formed of earth this mortal frame,
Breathed the breath of life in me,
And a spirit I became,

“Wrapped within my swaddling bands,
Found and fettered helplessly,
I stretched forth my infant hands
To embrace sweet Liberty

“Till I die, or meet my doom,
On the shameful gallows-tree —
Till the portals of the tomb,
I will shout forth Liberty!”

A GIRL RECITES: (Mother)

“Sweet slumber now creeps o'er thee slow,
Sweet breezes rock thee to and fro:
My baby sleeps, so soft and low
With sweetest songs I'll sing *oror*. (lullaby).

“Why dost thou shed those tears that flow
Down thy sad cheeks with pearly glow?
Thou'l break thy heart with sobbing so,—
Whom wilt thou have to sing *oror*?

(Baby)

"At least my hands and feet unbind—
My tender limbs are all confined;
That gentle sleep my eyes my find,
Then tie me in, and sing *oror*."

A BOY RECITES:

"Heaven and earth were in travail,
And the crimson waters were in travail.
And in the water, the crimson reed
Was also in travail.
From the mouth of the reed issued smoke,
From the mouth of the reed issued flame,
And out of the flame sprang the young child.
His hair was of fire, a beard had he of flame,
And his eyes were suns."

A GIRL RECITES:

"In many a distant, unknown land,
My sons beloved exiled roam,
Servile they kiss the stranger's hand;
How shall I find and bring them home?

"The Ages pass, no tidings come;
My brave ones fall, are lost and gone.
My blood is chilled, my voice dumb,
And friend and comfort I have none.

"How long must we in patience wait
And bear unmurmuringly our fate?
Let evil ones be swept away
And those whom Thou dost favor, stay!"

A BOY RECITES:

“Brave King Artashes
Mounted his fine black charger,
And took the red leather cord
With the golden ring.
Like a swift-winged eagle
He passed over the river,
And cast the golden ring
Round the waist of the Alan Princess,
Causing much pain
To the tender maiden
As he bore her swiftly
Back to his camp.”

“It rained showers of gold when Artashes became a groom.
It rained pearls when Satenik became a bride.”

A GIRL RECITES:

“If Goghtan’s bards no longer crown
Armenia’s heroes with their lays,
Let deathless souls from Heaven come down,
Our valiant ones to praise!
Ye shining angel hosts, descend:
On Ararat’s white summit pause:
Let God Himself the heavens rend,
To come and judge our cause.”

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*after the song-fest, to her class*). Before I dismiss the class, I want you to remember clearly what I told you. I warn you, unless your singing improves greatly, we won’t be able to take part in the commencement exercises. (*With the idea of spurring them to greater effort*) I would be ashamed to appear with such a group. Think this over carefully and act accordingly. . . Class dismissed! (*The pupils leave the*

room gleefully, thru the right and left side doors, rear. Lights are turned on.)

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*walking to the teacher and shaking hands heartily*). What an unexpected pleasure! And I thought I would not meet anybody on the Island that I knew. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: So unexpected, and such a welcome surprise for me, too, I can assure you.

PROF. LEVONIAN: There is so much to talk about.

MRS. VARTANIAN: A tremendous lot. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Enough has taken place during these past years—over thirty years, to be exact—and since the last Marash tragedy of 1920 and the Cilician wars, and before that, the black year of 1915 and . . . enough to fill several thick volumes.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Enough indeed and more. (*Looks at her watch*). The next class starts in a few minutes. I do hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again; and perhaps discuss old times at some length. The last time we saw each other we were in our twenties, and now. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: I certainly hope to see you again—and soon! There is so much to discuss and to reminisce about. Good-bye for now. (*They shake hands. As the curtain falls, the Professor leaves the room*).

CURTAIN

SCENE III

SCENE *Same as Scene I. Time is about 5:30 p.m. The table is placed to the right of the basin, with four chairs around it. It is covered with a table cloth. There are dishes, glasses, etc., on the table, in preparation for dinner for four.*

AT RISE *Rupen is seen trying to balance a small tomato on the gushing stream. As the curtain rises, Zvart in waitress' apron is seen entering the garden with a tray.*

ZVART: Silly, what are you doing *now*?

RUPEN: Does it need explaining?

ZVART: Can't you do *something* to help make your dinner a success?

RUPEN: For example.

ZVART: For example? Transfer the contents of the tray to the table, for example.

RUPEN: All right (*he does as told, though awkwardly*).

ZVART: They should come in shortly.

RUPEN: I wonder which one will be first.

ZVART: It's a great mystery to me. Whoever you are expecting, of course. Who else? (*Prof. Levonian is seen entering the garden, with his "traveling baggage" in hand*). Here is Baron Levonian!

RUPEN: Welcome, Sir! Besides Zvart, another person is bound to be surprised this evening here.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Hello, Baron Rupen. Hello, Miss Zvart; it is nice to see you again, and so soon! I do hope you will excuse me just for a few minutes.

RUPEN: Of course, Sir, as you please.

PROF. LEVONIAN: The news. . . . (*His "traveling baggage" is a portable radio. He sets it up, raises the antenna, and tunes in New York*).

RADIO: This is WURC, Universal Radio Corporation, New York City, Bulletin! John Lowtower of the A.P. Bureau in Washington states that according to unimpeachable sources who decline

the use of their names, our troops' advance from the north, north-west and west, exceeding the fondest of our hopes. The end of the war is clearly in sight in Europe, in the near future However, the public is warned against over-optimism, and is urged not to relax its war efforts. . . . (*now London is tuned in*).

RADIO: London calling. London calling. This is the BBC in London. According to Rider's trustworthy sources whose identity must remain anonymous for the present, Allied advances in western Europe somewhat exceeds Supreme Command expectations. The V-E Day is perhaps not too far in the future. However, our efforts cannot be permitted to relax. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*Turning off the radio*). Translated into everyday English, things look pretty good indeed. The war may actually be over in Europe before I return to Lebanon. . . .

RUPEN AND ZVART: (*excitedly*) Good! We hope so!

RUPEN: (*addressing Levonian*). Baron Levonian, this dinner may surprise two others beside you.

PROF. LEVONIAN: I am not one to run away from pleasant surprises. (*Seeing Mrs. Vartanian enter the garden*). Welcome, Mrs. Vartanian. Today turned out to be a day of surprises for me! (*Zvart leaves with the tray*).

MRS. VARTANIAN: For me, too. Fortunately, happy surprises.

RUPEN: This will prove a surprise for a third person too, I am sure. In the meantime, may I introduce you two. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*with a far-away look*). There is no need for that, Baron Rupen.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Professor Levonian was my late husband's best friend. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN (*noticing the heart-shaped golden keepsake that Mrs. Vartanian is wearing*). The keepsake. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: Rupen, it was presented to me by the Professor in 1914—one of the few things I was able to keep. . . .

RUPEN: Wonderful! I am so glad you two met again. (*Zvart returns with a trayful of food, etc.*) Zvart, please take your apron off. This chair is for you.

ZVART: (*much surprised*). Thank you. (*Takes her chair*).

RUPEN: (*standing up*). I wish to thank you all for accepting my invitation and thus help me celebrate my eighteenth birthday. Thank you again. We have on the menu some things I hope you will like . . . Armenian rice, roast chicken, lamb stew with string beans, madzoon, some Armenian pastry, thanks to Zvart's parents and . . . (*Sits down*) May we start. (*Zvart serves the soup. Rupen produces a bottle of wine from under the table.*)

ALL IN UNISON: Happy Birthday, Rupen.

PROF. LEVONIAN: This is certainly a happy occasion.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Professor, Rupen and Zvart have been my pupils. Zvart's parents are in charge of the kitchen . . . Wonderful couple. Rupen's father is the administrator of the Convent's extensive estates—and very competent, too, fortunately for us.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Very good!

RUPEN: (*Filling the glasses with wine—Zvart declines*). May we drink this to the successful completion of your mission, Professor? (*They drink. A second glass is toasted to Rupen's health. After that one, Mrs. Vartanian declines further drinks. The men have several more. The drinks affect them somewhat.*)

PROF. LEVONIAN: I begin to like Cyprus very much, and for that one reason.

RUPEN: I understand you spent quite a few years in America. I would like to learn a great deal about America.

PROF. LEVONIAN: It is a large order, Rupen; some other time I would like to discuss the subject with you in some detail, to the best of my ability. The United States is a great country . . . and great countries are rather complex. I particularly like the founding fathers. I admire their courage and marvel at their vision. Men such as Washington, Jefferson and Thomas Paine . . . And men also like the great Lincoln and Wilson, to mention but a few. . . .

ZVART: Rupen, the food is getting cold.

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*jocularly*). You are right, Zvart, I agree with you.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Indeed you are both right! And I have not seen you (*looking to Mrs. Vartanian*) since 1914. As you recall, soon afterward I left for America. There is so much I would like to find out.

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*in an attempt to delay pricking of old wounds*). We all agreed to discuss matters of interest at a more opportune time, right? Professor, it has not been an easy life . . . I could not shake myself loose from the past for a long time. Dreams—and more dreams of the past. Adjusting oneself to a new life, new surroundings, is not an easy task physically, mentally and spiritually. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: I believe I understand you completely . . . I am referring to your last sentence.

MRS. VARTANIAN: You too must have wrestled with problems of adjustment—although your life story is completely unknown to me, since our last meeting in 1914. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Indeed I have.

MRS. VARTANIAN: These past six years I have had reason to be quite well contented. The abbess is a very able and understanding—and patriotic—woman. I love teaching. And as soon as the war is over, I am going to leave for America, to join my son.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Your son?

MRS. VARTANIAN: Don't you remember Ara? He got his Ph.D. in physics from Yale's Sheffield Scientific School three years ago.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Now . . . Of course I remember little Ara. Remarkable! And I got my doctor's degree in literature from Yale also: of course that was years ago.

MRS. VARTANIAN: I certainly am glad to hear that. Perhaps you can help me . . . I have just about completed a novel. I would like a frank opinion as to its merit or lack of it. I have put my heart and soul into it. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: It will be a rare privilege for me, I can assure you. How about next Saturday morning, for a fuller discussion of your book?

MRS. VARTANIAN: Fine.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Rupen and Zvart, tell me something: was Mrs. Vartanian a good teacher to you?

RUPEN AND ZVART: (*together*). Wonderful!

RUPEN: You noticed the black curtain opposite the alphabet table in the classroom? There is an Armenian tricolor concealed back of that. Once a year Mrs. Vartanian gave us a brief lecture how at Gaban in 1375—that's Zvart's parents' home town: their last name is Lousinian, the surname of the last kings of Armenian Cilicia—our flag was hauled down and we lost our independence. Our troubles really began right there and then. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Very aptly put . . . And the rivers of blood we have been shedding ever since that black day. (*Changing the subject*) I believe it's time for me to leave. (*Gets up*) My sincere thanks for everything.

MRS. VARTANIAN: That goes for me, too. (*To the professor*) See you at my room at 10 in the morning, then?

PROF. LEVONIAN: Yes. Thank you again. Good-bye.

RUPEN: (*Zvart nodding approval*). The pleasure was ours, we assure you.

ZVART: The professor's arrival here seems destined to mean a great deal to us all already.

RUPEN: I foresee some exciting developments ahead.

(*As the curtain falls, the professor and Mrs. Vartanian are on their way: Rupen and Zvart are occupied with the dishes and so forth at the table*).

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

SCENE: Mrs. Vartanian's bedroom. It is a neat fair-sized room. The bed is in the rear. A dresser to left of it, rear. There is a large table, left, center, a pile of papers on it. There is a chair in front of the table, and one to the left. There is a kerosene lamp on both the table and the dresser. A piano is seen on the right, center, and a book case next to it. A picture hangs on the wall, rear. Both the right and left walls have windows. The door is to the left, front.

AT RISE: Mrs. Vartanian is seen fingering some papers.

MRS. VARTANIAN: *(as she hears knocks at the door).* Come in!

PROF. LEVONIAN: Good morning, Mrs. Vartanian; I hope you are well.

MRS. VARTANIAN: *(getting up to welcome him).* Good morning! Come right in, *(shaking hands)*; please make yourself at home.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Thank you, Mrs.— May I call you by your first name, Nvart—as in the old days?

MRS. VARTANIAN: Of course, you may.

PROF. LEVONIAN: *(sitting on the chair).* There is so much to discuss I don't know where to begin.

MRS. VARTANIAN: There is indeed a whole lot to discuss—this is the first time I have seen you since 1914; that was at Marash, you remember? Time certainly flies.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Of course I do. I returned to Marash in 1920; that was just a day before the disaster. . . I hardly had the opportunity to see anybody. Of course you know about Mary and my daughters Araxie and Anahis. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: No traces of them were to be found—I well remember. All I have left in the world myself is Ara *(She*

points at his picture); The others perished in 1920. Of course Haig fell during the capture of the citadel. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*trying to change the subject*). So this is the young man anxiously waiting for you?

MRS. VARTANIAN: Yes—but I have not heard from him for two long years. (*Produces his last letter*).

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*reading part of the letter*). “. . . But do not worry if you do not receive letters regularly from me. I am writing you from a different part of the country, where I am engaged in a Government project. All I can say is that it is an extremely interesting job, perhaps with some military significance. Please keep writing to me regularly. I am already planning for our reunion, as soon as the war ends. Be of good cheer and take care of your health. . . . (*The Professor inspects the postmark on the envelope, and a puzzled look on his face ensues*) New Mexico . . . New Mexico. I can’t explain for the life of me. Well, I do hope you settle down in America in a place where you can make a few good friends and compatible acquaintances, since the change of environment will be considerable. . . . (*Then all of a sudden*):

THE VOICE: For whom the bell tolls? . . . For the victims of the great crimes. . . . crimes that many want to forget . . . and forgive! Like Pontius Pilate of another era, they are so eager to wash their hands of innocent blood. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: I meant to ask you—this pealing and constant dirge of the bell: has a prominent person died in the Convent or the City? It’s been ringing its dirge for hours.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Don’t you remember? Today is April 24, the Armenian Memorial Day. This is our way of reminding ourselves and the “civilized” and “Christian” world of the brutal murder of two million innocent Armenians during World War I and before, and after, by the barbarians. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Your Convent is the only place on the face of the globe to commemorate that tragic event thus, I am sure.

MRS. VARTANIAN: . . . Thanks to the abbess. She is a wonderful person and patriotic.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Her deed speaks volumes. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: Although we seldom talk to each other, I believe we understand each other perfectly. If it were not for the kerosene she supplied during these war years, I could have never finished the book.

PROF. LEVONIAN: That's what I meant a little while ago by "compatibility." I do hope you have similar luck in the New World. . . . The best in the Armenian character and the best in the American character blend into a pretty good citizen. Newer citizens are somewhat unduly impressed by the cheaper media, by superficialities. Fundamentals are often overlooked or not clearly understood. For some of our people also, it is sometimes impossible to forget some of our Levantine sloppiness or habits. . . . Excessive attention to the vogue and so-called modernism, and an easy forgetfulness of the tragic past, are other shortcomings. I hope I am not boring you.

MRS. VARTANIAN: On the contrary!

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*looks at his watch*). Time flies. And we have not said a word regarding the business at hand. I have a business appointment for 11:30. Then, I shall be away for a few days. I shall return before Easter. Tell me, Nvart, have you completed your novel?

MRS. VARTANIAN: Practically. I am rewriting the last chapter.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Good! In that case, could I take the completed chapters with me, so that I can read and appraise them?

MRS. VARTANIAN: Certainly. I would appreciate an impartial verdict—completely impartial.

PROF. LEVONIAN: It will be that. I would not think of misleading you. Am I correct in saying that you spent your time and efforts as a labor of love on this work?

MRS. VARTANIAN: Of course—and nothing else. I felt that there are certain things that needed to be said desperately. Silence would be tantamount to condoning certain awful crimes . . . The urge was irresistible. Whether I have succeeded in saying what I had to say with a reasonable amount of competence if not with eloquence or inspiration, remains to be seen. (*With a wistful smile*) If tears could help make a novel great, mine is destined to be a masterpiece.

PROF. LEVONIAN: In all seriousness, I do. Tears are an indelible and phosphorescent ink. By the way, there are lots of things I wish to ask you about my best friend, and your late husband, Haig, and the conflict at Marash, since I witnessed the conflict from one vantage point, while you from another. (*With emotion*) Did you know that we were blood brothers—your husband and I?

MRS. VARTANIAN: . . . No, not until now.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Now, will you give me the manuscript? You may be sure I will take good care of it.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Of course, I am sure of that.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Well, good-bye, Nvart; I hope and pray to return here with good news about your book.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Thank you. Well, what will be, will be. (*She walks to the door with the Professor.*) Good-bye and thank you again. I shall be expecting to greet you here Easter morning. (*The Professor leaves.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE II

SCENE: *Nine o'clock; bright Easter morning. Mrs. Vartanian's bedroom. There is a vase of flowers on the table, as well as about a dozen of Easter cards.*

AT RISE: *Mrs. Vartanian is seen arranging the flowers and the cards.*

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*hearing a knock at the door*). Come in!

PROF. LEVONIAN: Good morning—and (*shaking hands*) Christ has arisen from the dead!

MRS. VARTANIAN: Blessed is Christ's Resurrection!

PROF. LEVONIAN: And what a beautiful morning! Besides, I have *good news for you*, (*puts his brief case on the table; then they sit on their respective chairs*). Wonderful news! It makes my heart sing—and thank God for your talent! You have a masterpiece on your hands! How long have you been laboring on this book? Tremendous research, matchless prose, and true story-teller's gifts. I know—and I am not entirely unqualified to judge . . . I have taught literature at the university, and therefore the techniques of this craft are not unfamiliar to me.

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*surprised*). Aren't you exaggerating a bit, Professor?

PROF. LEVONIAN: No, no, on my word, no! Maybe you are a new Raffi—our Raffi. Or an Armenian Tolstoy. Everybody remembers great novels such as "Pride and Prejudice," "Gone with the Wind," "War and Peace," "Sparks," and now, "THE ARMENIAN CALVARY," by Princess Nvart! You see, I have written scores of book reviews for the Universal Times of New York, as well as for the Morning Monitor of Boston. You have produced a new, more comprehensive and genuine and more sharply focused novel than "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh." And the title, "THE ARMENIAN CALVARY," is perfect. Incidentally (*digressing for a moment*), I did do something without your permission, I hope you do not mind

... I wanted two of your former pupils to have a closer look at our recent past . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*somewhat surprised*). And what did you do?

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*takes a cigarette from his pack. Secures it in his cigarette holder. Offers one to Nvart; they smoke occasionally during the rest of the play*). I let Rupen and Zvart read your book; and invited them to meet us here, then we can all go to church together. . . To Easter Mass.

MRS. VARTANIAN: You have done well.

PROF. LEVONIAN: . . . Before they respected you. Now they worship you. . . having had such a talented teacher. I think every Armenian should read your book—indeed anyone who lays claims to being “civilized,” or “Christian,” to understand some of the ugliest—indeed revolting—aspects of the world in which we live.

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*hearing knock at the door*). Come in! (*Rupen and Zvart, dressed in their best, enter; the latter carrying Armenian coffee and delicacies on a tray, and the former a letter and an Easter card in his hand. Mrs. Vartanian notices the mail, and is displeased, but does not say anything.*)

RUPEN: (*walks toward dresser to deposit the mail on same*). Congratulations, Mrs. Vartanian—and two pieces of mail. (*Nods to the Professor*).

ZVART: Princess, I am *so* proud of you. And all this time I thought I fully realized the agony and untold sufferings our people went through. . . (*nods to the Professor and places tray on table. Nvart fetches two chairs for the guests*).

RUPEN: . . . Now I understand when you said: “When a people loses its flag, it loses its honor.”

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*to Rupen*). Thank you for understanding me a little better. (*Eyeing Zvart*) Will you keep this to yourselves (*pointing to her cigarette*). I have been smoking since the disaster at Marash. (*To Rupen*): Will you bring the other cards here, please? (*She hands the cards to the Professor*). They are from old friends or their children. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*reads each post mark aloud, as he opens each envelope. Tries to read the Easter greetings*). Here is one from Jerusalem—in Armenian. This one is from Buenos Aires, in Spanish. The one in French is of course from Paris. One from Athens—in Greek. This one is from South Bend, Indiana, good old U.S.A.! The Portuguese one is from São Paulo. Baghdad—Aleppo—Alexandria and—Addis Ababa!

MRS. VARTANIAN: . . . There was a time the Jews were considered the wandering people of the globe—we certainly are competing for that dubious “honor” now!

ZVART: (*Offering the coffee and the delicacies*). The coffee is getting cold!

RUPEN: Indeed it is.

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*referring to the novel*). I learned a great deal about those terrible, inhuman, forced deportations; many extremely interesting details about the 1920 conflict at Marash and throughout Cilicia between the Armenians and the French on the one hand, and the Turks on the other—and lot more besides. Do you know that I arrived in Marash from America but a day before the conflict, and never again saw my wife and my two daughters—the war caught me in a different part of the city. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: How unfortunate. I did not know that.

PROF. LEVONIAN: And you liken our retreat from Marash to Adana as a “miniature Napoleonic retreat from Moscow.” How well put! And you departed a year and a half later, to hospitable if foreign shores. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: Yes.

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*addressing Rupen and Zvart, who listen attentively*). The novel, “THE ARMENIAN CALVARY,” is the work of a fertile imagination with a native ability for beautiful and masterful narrative, with all its shadings, and an irresistible desire or rather urge to give the world a message or tell a compelling or worthwhile story. In your case (*addressing himself to Nvart*), of course, the object was to depict the ghastly program of our enemy, the Turk—sometimes aided and abet-

ted, directly or indirectly, by our dear "Christian brethren" of the west—to exterminate an entire people . . . (*warming up*) The story indeed is woven like an exquisite oriental rug of unmatched design. The many beautiful threads are invisible to the naked eye, yet the finished product is breath-taking . . . and overpowering. The treaty of Sèvres, fixing Armenia's boundaries, promises as regards Cilicia . . . Tell me, if you will, how you managed to write this novel?

MRS. VARTANIAN: As I mentioned before, after we left Cilicia—that is, those of us who managed to keep alive—I was bothered with dreams and nightmares for years. Then I decided to devote considerable time to reading at night. It was quite an experience. Especially the classics. Then the idea occurred to me: the tragedies our people experienced were indeed often more terrible than the Greek tragedies of the old. No one could afford to undertake such a task lightly, of course, least of all I. Weeks and months of hesitation and procrastination—and killing doubts. How to produce an effective work, though the raw material was at hand? How? I kept on repeating the passage from Euripides.

THE VOICE:

"Plunged as I am 'midst great and piteous woes,
How shall I frame the plaintive strain, what Muse
With tears, or doleful elegies, invoke?"

MRS. VARTANIAN: When I started to write, there was no time for dreams or nightmares. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Your book covers twenty-five years—1895-1920—and tells a great deal. More than I ever knew before, in such detail.

MRS. VARTANIAN: And leaves some things unsaid. . . .

RUPEN: . . . As you know, Mrs. Vartanian, I am not much of a reader. But this novel of yours transformed me—made me appreciate many things which I was unable to understand before.

ZVART: (*gets up to collect the coffee cups*). Princess, your novel is a stirring one. (*Blushing*) More than once I could not restrain my tears. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: You are an excellent critic, Zvart. There are quite a few heart-warming episodes in the novel. But of course by and large it is a story of doom. The sense of impending disaster is relieved only occasionally. And the pathos of the situations some of the characters find themselves in . . . The desperate hopelessness of it all! Seekers of truth will surely find this novel not only a great literary accomplishment. . . including superb characterizations—but one also containing a wealth of illuminating and often stirring episodes depicting individual and national traits and characteristics; unmatched human bravery and devotion; weakness and cowardice . . . also conscienceless cruelty and depravity unfit for human beings . . .

RUPEN: Tell us, Princess, how is the book going to end?

ZVART: I hope she won't tell us now.

PROF. LEVONIAN: I think I know. But you will have to wait.

Many a critic or teacher would give his right arm to write such a stirring and memorable short story, novel or play. I know by bitter experience. In past years I myself tried—and the results were less than spectacular. I dabbled in music—with little success. Literature and music. What delightful twin! But, as Longfellow said: "Art is long, and time is fleeting." (*Pointing to the piano*) May I?

MRS. VARTANIAN: Of course! (*The Professor plays several bars of the following: "The Armenian Symphony," the "1812 Overture," "Finlandia," "The Fifth Symphony," by Beethoven; "Hymn to the Evening Star," and "Pomp, Porodan."*)

PROF. LEVONIAN: Heavenly music!

MRS. VARTANIAN: Masterful rendition! What a delightful surprise!

PROF. LEVONIAN: Well, I had to contend with such competition: such giants; and decided a graceful retreat was in order . . . (*Returning to his chair, and changing the subject.*) I think I know some of the characters in the book. Yet there are so many others . . . And the subtle implications as regards political events as they affect weak people.

MRS. VARTANIAN: No doubt you recognize some of the

characters. But there are others, as you say, whom you never knew.

PROF. LEVONIAN: You start with the Armenian intelligentsia in Constantinople. . . men of letters and in high government posts—in 1915; back to the glorious story of Zeytoune in 1895. Then back to the deportations. . . Arrests, exile and murders in near and far places: a chronicle of awful events as they affect individuals and a whole people, that were to be the beginnings of one of the blackest pages in recorded history. . . .

RUPEN: The thrilling story of Zeytoune and her brave 7500— their brilliant self-defense—whom over a hundred thousand Turkish troops and many thousand ruffians could not defeat and subdue in 1895, after our centuries' of subjugation to barbaric alien rule. They remind me of Leonidas and his brave three hundred, of glorious Greece of the olden days. How they wasted thousands of rounds of the enemy's ammunition by raising fezzes on sticks from their trenches . . . The great event . . . when they were compelled to salute the flag of Zeytoune . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Actually, we were cheated of our independence by the ambassadors of our own Christian "brethren" of Europe . . . This is an historical fact.

MRS. VARTANIAN: The brave defiance of little Fundujak of the Ottoman empire in 1915, in resisting exile. . .

ZVART: What bravery . . . What cruel fate . . .

THE VOICE:

"Dying as their fathers died,
For the God their foes denied . . ."

"This day Fundujak fell. Methinks I see: a host
Of jarring voices stirs the startled village,
Like oil and acid, sounds that will not mingle,
By natural hatred sundred."

PROF. LEVONIAN: The indescribably moving description of the exile of thousands upon thousands of Armenians of Cilicia—of the villagers—desolate sands of Der-es-Zor and other alien

parts, never to return home . . . Poisonings, inhuman tortures and beatings. Destruction and plunder! Rapes . . .

RUPEN: Priest Haigazoun's good-bye to his neighbors and friends: "tears gushing from his black, sad eyes"—

'Many today are departing . . .

But how many will return?

My people's disastrous fortunes I bewail.'

THE VOICE:

"Thou, O wretched Cilicia,

To crimes which thou hast ne'er committed, ow'st

Thy ruin, and those horrible disasters

Thou hast endured."

ZVART:

"Of their brave sons the mothers were bereft

The virgin sisters of the mighty dead

Strewed their shorn tresses on Euphrates' banks . . ."

MRS. VARTANIAN: It is a long story. I wonder whether people will be bored because it is sad. . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: People are never bored by such stories, I can assure you.

ZVART: I can never forget the fate of Asdghig, a beautiful young girl from Erzourum, who finds herself in a harem in Marash in 1917. . . One day she meets by chance three refugees in rags in the street—three once proud ladies—Shoghagatte, Parantzem and Serpouhi. The last one her very own mother! With a baby in her arms. . . But her husband had been killed in late 1915 . . . and the "blue-eyed, fair-skinned Eliza," about to become a mother, killed in the 1920 conflict of Marash, and her unborn twin sons bayoneted by our base foes. . .

THE VOICE:

"Sure, piety instructs us not to rob

The dead of their accustomed dues."

RUPEN: But do they know what piety is?

MRS. VARTANIAN: That was my husband Haig's sister . . . My sister-in-law!

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*depressed*). Rupen, will you please open

the windows? It is quite warm. (*Changing to a happier mood*). And the victory of the Armenian unit under General Allenby at Arara in the Syrian front . . . The collapse of the Turkish Army . . . (*The hymns of the Armenian Easter mass filter in through the windows: parts of Sourp, Sourp, Krisdos Badarakyal and Kohoutiune are heard in that order.*)

RUPEN: Armenian volunteers land on Cilician soil with the French, kissing the soil on which they stand. . .

THE VOICE:

“O blessed light! O happy day proclaiming
The justice of the gods!
And to see these shores I weep for every joy.
Hail Cilicia! dear fatherland, all hail!
This tenth year’s light doth shine on my return!
And now this one heart’s hope from countless wrecks
I save! Scarce hoped I e’er to lay my bones
Within the tomb where dearest dust is stored.
I greet thee, native land! Thee, shining sun!”

MRS. VARTANIAN: Armenian life was again resurrecting from the ashes like a phoenix all over Cilicia. It was again stirring in Mervin, Tarsus, Adana, Hadjin, Gaban, Zeytoune, Marash, Aintab, Sis—the religious center of the GREAT HOUSE OF CILICIA. Even in remote—and beloved—Lampron—Those who survived the terrible deportations returned home, one by one or in small groups, with hopes of bright and happy tomorrows . . . But the black days and the almost fatal wounds were not forgotten . . .

THE VOICE:

“Ah! many a Cilician heart today
Is pricked with wail and mourning,
Knowing how many went to Der-es-Zor,
From Der-es-Zor how few returning!
The mothers of each house shall wait
To greet their sons at every gate;
But, alas! not men, but dust of men
Each sorrowing house receiveth,

The urn in which the fleshly case
Its cindered ruin leaveth."

PROF. LEVONIAN: Your descriptions are so vibrant and life-like. Simple yet superbly done and so effective! The British arrive in Marash. A memorable parade. Orations. Stage presentations. Great receptions—and expectations! Neither the British nor the Turks could believe their eyes. Armenian recovery and reconstruction was startling. Then . . . dissension among the allies. The British leave and the French take their place. And back stabbings . . . (*Looks at his watch*) We are almost late for Church . . . Victory at Marash is turned into a disastrous defeat, thanks to international "high-level" and thoroughly immoral power politics. Betrayal at Marash heralded disaster for all Cilicia! (*The hymn sung by the deacons at church somewhat jolts him.*) Has it ever occurred to you, Nvart, Rupen and Zvart, that the good and generous Armenian Apostolic church has been offering this prayer for centuries for "Christian kings and pious princes"? And what have the sister churches of the West done for us? Just imagine! (*The thought does not please him*) Forgive me for talking too much . . . We must continue some other time. (*Changing the subject*) I have been hearing good news over the radio. There is something in the air . . . I won't be surprised if the war ends shortly—far sooner than we expect.

MRS. VARTANIAN: It surely won't be a second too soon for me.

RUPEN: My peace-time plans are almost ready, if in a somewhat nebulous form.

ZVART: I would be so happy. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: I shall be away on business for two weeks or so. I shall be back however, in two weeks from tomorrow. I am being offered a permanent assignment on the Island in the meantime, which I am considering very seriously. There are certain advantages. . . .

ZVART: Will you, Professor, and you, Princess, be my luncheon guests as soon as Baron Levonian returns? At the garden?

PROF. LEVONIAN: I shall be happy to.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Thank you, Zvart.

RUPEN: May I invite myself, Zvart?

ZVART: You may come if you promise to be of some assistance,
(a bit of laughter. They leave for church.)

CURTAIN

SCENE III

SCENE: *The garden. The table and chairs are arranged as before.*

AT RISE: *Rupen is seen trying to place a cherry or a small tomato on top of the gushing fountain, and playing "Cilicia" on his harmonica. A few seconds after Professor Levonian enters, carrying his portable radio in one hand, and his brief case in the other. He sets up the radio, pulls out the telescoping antenna, intent on listening to news broadcasts from New York; and London.*

PROF. LEVONIAN: Are you taking up music as a hobby, Rupen?

RUPEN: (*in a jocular mood.*) Yes, Baron Levonian. In fact I am about to graduate to a flute. I am told Armenian shepherds were pretty good at it in Cilicia. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Yes. I personally remember one—his name was Michael. I was told he never returned from the deportations . . . By the way, I hope to hear some good news over the radio in a short while—a special bulletin—but my batteries are almost dead. Too bad you do not have electricity here.

RUPEN: I hope there is enough life left in them so that we can hear the news.

ZVART: (*entering with a tray, and noticing a tomato on the fountain*) Hello, Professor—and thank you for your help, Rupen.

RUPEN: We are discussing important matters here. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*entering the garden.*) Hello, Professor, how are you? (*Shaking hands.*) Zvart, thank you for your trouble—I can see you are going to make a wonderful wife for some lucky individual. I do hope Rupen is making himself useful.

ZVART: Look at the fountain—besides, he has been discussing important matters with the Professor.

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*noticing the little tomato playing on the fountain.*) Oh, that. . . .

ZVART: Of course, the men are entitled to their important talks.

Luncheon is ready, everybody! (*they all sit at the table for luncheon.*)

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*addressing Rupen*) I have been considering your problem for a few days. Tell me, Rupen, do you like mathematics, scientific or technical subjects. . . books?

RUPEN: If truth must be told—no. I would like to be a good business man like my father, and a good accountant; that's all. Before I forget it, Mrs. Vartanian, I was to the city this morning—here is a special delivery letter for you (*The Professor is somewhat surprised with these letters.*)

PROF. LEVONIAN: Frankly, in that case, I can't see what good additional schooling will do for you, especially in the United States. An advanced accounting course here on the Island should be satisfactory. And a slide rule would help. . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*addressing the Professor.*) That has been my opinion too, having known Rupen for sometime. However, I promised him that I would advise him from America, when I get there after the war.

ZVART: If I only had the opportunity to continue my schooling —especially in America. I love books. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: About your novel, Nvart. I would be happy to translate it into English, if you wish. I have several contacts in reputable publishing houses in New York and Boston who may be interested in publishing it.

MRS. VARTANIAN: I would greatly appreciate it.

RUPEN: Professor, do you think Hollywood might be interested in this story?

ZVART: That would be wonderful. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Apparently you do not know what happened to "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh." Although thousands of Americans still vividly remember that novel, but a handful know that our enemies were successful in preventing its filming. Yes. . . .

RUPEN: How can that happen in a FREE country?

PROF. LEVONIAN: Even in free countries, some cheap politicians and forces of dubious objectives and "interests," sometimes make mockery of free speech and expression and even of

free thought! We Eastern Christians have been and are often so simple and naïve—particularly when international politics is concerned. . . . but let's adhere to the subject at hand.

ZVART: But is what you say possible?

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*somewhat bitter*) The world. . . the facade—but never mind; let's tackle the problems before us. (*Zvart excuses herself and leaves to fetch Armenian coffee.*) Well, I have completed my survey of the schools on the Island. I shall present my recommendations to Headquarters in Beirut; then will return here for a few more weeks, to make my final decision. Opportunities for creative literary work here are exceptional, I think. A peaceful haven, one might say.

MRS. VARTANIAN: I think you are quite right. I hope I shall not miss the opportunities that I have had here, when I get to America.

PROF. LEVONIAN: All I can say is, I hope so (*Turns on the radio.*)

RUPEN: . . . About filming the Princess' novel—haven't the times changed for the better? Our little Armenia has shed so much blood in this present struggle, while our enemies—not a single drop!

PROF. LEVONIAN: Very true indeed! Here is hoping your optimism is justified (*Zvart returns with the coffee.*)

RADIO: (*all are listening eagerly*). "This is WUBC, the Universal Broadcasting Corporation, New York, the United States of America. Please stand by for a special bulletin! We now switch you to Washington for that special bulletin. 'This is John Lowtower: I can report based on information from unimpeachable sources that our enemies have signed documents of surrender within the last two hours. Official statements from the State Department and the Office of War Information are expected momentarily. Please stand by . . . Now I am reading an official release': 'THE WAR IS OVER.' 'Our sacrifices have not been in vain. UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER means unconditional justice for all. The strong and the weak can hereafter live and work side by side, throughout the world! Without fear! The arrogant Huns have learned their lesson. RESTITUTION

and/or COMPENSATION will be made to those who have been wronged. . . .”

RUPEN: Does that mean us, too?

ZVART: I hope so!

(The Professor tunes in London. Rupen leaves the garden.)

RADIO: “London calling, London calling. This is the BBC. We are waiting for an official statement on the war situation . . . I have just been handed this official statement.” ‘Germany has surrendered on Allied terms. The war is over.’

MRS. VARTANIAN: I can’t believe it.

ZVART: I am so happy I could cry!

PROF. LEVONIAN: The battery is dead! *(Turns off the radio).* Washington and London confirm it. It must be true. Thank God. *(Addressing Mrs. Vartanian)* Now you can prepare in earnest for your voyage.

MRS. VARTANIAN: It seems like a dream. . . .

ZVART: When you first see Ara, Princess, what are you going to tell him?

MRS. VARTANIAN: That will depend, Zvart, on the time and circumstances. As of now a certain passage from Euripides applies—

PROF. LEVONIAN:

“A thousand shapes our varying fates assume
The gods perform what least we could expect,
And oft the things for which we fondly hoped
Come not to pass; but Heaven still finds a clue
To guide our steps through life’s perplexing maze . . .”

ZVART: *(blushing)* . . . They say, “confession is good for the soul”; Princess, I have been in love with Ara ever since you showed me his picture. I wish I were a few years older . . . *(her listeners are quite surprised).*

PROF. LEVONIAN: No one could blame you for that. A brilliant and good-looking young man like Ara. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: *(a few bars of “Cilicia” are heard on a flute).* Many thanks for your compliments.

RUPEN: *(enters the garden in a few seconds. He now wears*

boots, a sweater and cap; he is armed with a revolver and a shot gun and a cartridge belt for same). I am getting ready to return to our fatherland, to Cilicia (*points to the mountain peaks*)! And in this connection I may add these words of wisdom have reached my ears. "Carry a BIG stick and speak LOUDLY!"

PROF. LEVONIAN: No, no, Rupen, Teddy Roosevelt did not say it that way: "Speak softly and carry a BIG stick," that was his version.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Our people have great expectations of our Western Christian "Brethren" again. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: They have deceived or abandoned us more than once. . . (*Changing the subject*) Won't you inform the abbess of the good news—I think we have been lax in our responsibility.

MRS. VARTANIAN: By all means, yes. (*She leaves to spread the good news*)

PROF. LEVONIAN: Rupen, you have the right idea . . . The world—the entire world—unfortunately often respects brute force only. . . Had our fathers and forefathers been less idealistic and more practical and world-wise . . .

ZVART: My parents talk a great deal about Cilicia; "the good old days," they often discuss.

RUPEN: I too have a deep love for Cilicia—It has a fascination for me.

PROF. LEVONIAN: If I had not entertained similar views, I would not be here today. If the West only remembered the needed help our people gave them in recent wars, to the Crusaders in Cilicia. . . Cooperation during the early years of the Christian era . . .

ZVART: They should.

RUPEN: I say "AMEN" to that!

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*in happy mood—rare for her—returns*). The abbess is going to dismiss the classes—half a day's holiday for everybody!

PROF. LEVONIAN: Good! Thanks for the luncheon, Zvart. (*Gets up; closes cover of his radio set.*) I hope to see you good people in two weeks (*Bids them good-bye.*) And start work on

"THE ARMENIAN CALVARY" promptly. The Princess' time is short!

(*The bell starts pealing out the good news. Shortly some school children appear in the garden, talking loudly, and some shouting: "The war is over, hurray, hurray! Victory! The war is over! The war is over!"*)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE I

SCENE: *Two weeks later. It is 7:30 p.m. The abbess' office. It is a small room with a small desk in rear, facing the audience. There are some papers and books on it, as well as a kerosene lamp. Two windows each, on right and left. Several chairs. A book case by the wall, center, right. The walls are decorated by pictures of religious significance. The door is to the left, front.*

AT RISE: *A good-looking abbess in her mid-fifties is at her desk, reading.*

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: (*hearing knocks at the door*). Come in.

(*Rises and greets the caller*) How do you do, Baron Levonian?

PROF. LEVONIAN: I am very well, thank you. Now that the war is over, I am quite busy with my plans for the schools. There is so much to do for the next school year—much to be planned and, more important, to execute. I am certain of your cooperation and advice.

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: Of course, of course, you can count on my whole-hearted cooperation. However, I sent for you at this—for us—untimely hour for a more immediate and rather urgent problem—

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*somewhat surprised*) I am at a complete loss to anticipate the problem you refer to.

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: It refers to Mrs. Vartanian—

PROF. LEVONIAN: Oh, yes, I meant to inform you of her wonderful success with her novel, "THE ARMENIAN CALVARY," at an opportune time. It is a masterpiece! I am going to translate it into what I hope will be satisfactory English—it is in beautiful Armenian now—as soon as I can. When she gets to America, she will already be recognized as a very capable authoress, I hope.

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: You have known her in the old country. . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Haig—her late husband—and I were very close friends. I saw them last in 1914. We graduated from the same college. . . I do hope she won't be disappointed with the Armenians in America. Sometimes I really feel—this is just between you and me—that the change may not be to her liking. . . a woman who can write "THE ARMENIAN CALVARY" may have a difficult time finding compatible companions.

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: I am happy, very happy about the book. And I think I know exactly what you mean. She is one in a million. . . Sensitive, proud, and sincere. And able.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Exactly. You understand her quite well.

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: She has confided a few things to me. Not that we have been very close. But she is every inch a princess—and an excellent Armenian, the kind that one can be proud of. Incidentally, I wish to let you know in passing, if you promise to forget it here and now—

PROF. LEVONIAN: If you say so, yes.

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: Some evil tongues have gossiped about your seeing her in her room. Knowing her, I have refused to pay any attention to such idle talk. Now, a few things that she has told me. She once said: "If it were not love at first sight, I would have never married Haig, and move to Marash to live. Zeytoune—and freedom—was a high price to pay for love." She said she suffered from claustrophobia. She refers to Cilicia often. "Tremulous, shimmering and glittering stars in the pure blue of the beautiful Cilician sky—a sky that filled one with unfathomable mystery, yet inspired one with a deep sense of security, serenity, courage and contentment. And a sense of well-being and hope! Hope of a brighter tomorrow. . . "

PROF. LEVONIAN: How true—and beautifully said!

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: She also said once that she had gone through half a dozen or so experiences she could never forget. . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: It would be so interesting to know, yet one may never learn the complete story. . .

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: You are right—never the complete story. . . She has told me some, however. Parenthetically let me add

here also, the fact that Mr. Torrossian, the wealthy cigarette manufacturer, has shown great interest in her for the last two years. His wife died three years ago. I have reason to believe that Rupen has been acting as his special courier. But Nvart has told me several times confidentially: "Money alone can never bring happiness." Of course she is right; observing her as I have been doing for some years—albeit from a distance—I think they would not be compatible at all. And now back to her story. One was told to her by her mother: how six hundred Turkish troops in their armory surrendered in 1895 to the brave sons of Zeytoune, how well over a hundred thousand troops of the Ottoman empire failed to subdue Zeytoune, after centuries of the hated foreign yoke. And they had come to massacre the populace! The second is the concern devoted to the works of the famous Gomidas in Marash in 1914, where you, too, were present. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: I remember that clearly—as though it happened yesterday

ABBESSION TAKOUHI: Another was her first experience in Marash. Of course she could not speak a word of Turkish when she got there. Her mother-in-law—a diplomat—had told the Turkish neighbors that she was a native of Erzourum. Because the Turks hated the guts of Zeytoune and could not stomach their native bravery. One woman had complained bitterly. "We cannot sleep soundly in our vineyard because of their fear!" I am sure you will recognize Haig in the novel. He was exiled to Deres-Zor twice; tried in Aleppo on trumped-up charges, somehow escaped the gallows. Well, his bravery during the 1920 conflict is legendary—how under his leadership the citadel was captured through a secret underground passage, a passage used by Armenian nobility who lived in the citadel centuries ago, to get to the bath house at the foot of the citadel. . . . The capture of the Hill of the Apostles Bartholomew and Thaddaeus, where we used to make a yearly pilgrimage to the shrine—(*She looks at her watch*) I am sorry, I did not mean to detain you so long. Hers is a long and sad story: she has secrets we shall never learn. But the demands of the moment are a lot more urgent, Profes-

sor Levonian. I need your help. In fact you are the only one who can be of any help at this moment—

PROF. LEVONIAN: What is it, Sister Takouhi? I am more than willing to do all I can—

ABBESS TAKOUHI: I am very sorry to give you this sad news: Ara is dead! Nvart received a letter a week ago from a laboratory where he had been working in America. He has died—due to a mishap—four months ago. Poor Nvart's brittle heart is broken. . . . She is on the verge of a complete breakdown. She has hardly been eating anything lately. You are the only one here who can perhaps console her—that is why I sent for you at this hour.

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*dazed*). Of course, of course. I shall go and see her immediately. . . . but, what can I say? How can ANYONE console her? We had not had time for a really long discussion yet. However, she related to me that her eldest son was frozen to death during the retreat to Adana. Her second son had volunteered to carry a message from the Latin church to the American girls' college at the end of the conflict. He had left with a white flag in his hand—never to be seen again. The barbarians had killed him. A baby daughter had "perished" during the conflict. And now Ara. . . .

ABBESS TAKOUHI: She personifies the tragedy of a whole people We have no time to waste.

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*very saddened*) I shall do what I can. (*He leaves the room.*)

ABBESS TAKOUHI: (*left to herself, the abbess brushes a tear from her eye with handkerchief*) O Lord, O Lord, have mercy on us! But we must bear the Cross. Thy will be done . . .

CURTAIN

SCENE II

SCENE: *Mrs. Vartanian's bedroom. About 8 p.m., same evening. There is a black ribbon around Ara's picture.*

AT RISE: *Nvart is seated at the table, somewhat unkempt, apparently trying to read a book before the kerosene lamp. It is clear that she is unable to concentrate on anything. Indeed, she is in a quandary.*

MRS. VARTANIAN: *(bearing a knock at the door, and much surprised, and mechanically)* Come in.

PROF. LEVONIAN: *(entering)* I do hope I am not too late. Just want to spend a few minutes with you—with Sister Takouhi's permission.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Come in, Levon. I am glad you are back—you must have heard—

PROF. LEVONIAN: *(shaking hands, and lost for words)* Yes—but I cannot believe what I have heard. Your years of waiting, concentrated work. Plans for a new and brighter life. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: *(Closing the book, and offering him a chair, to sit by her)* Levon, the book is finished.

PROF. LEVONIAN: But how, and why? It is impossible to believe. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: But none the less true. Levon, deep down in my heart, I really never believed this dream of mine would ever materialize. Of course, I don't know exactly why. Some people are born to suffer—like individual human beings—and to suffer more, and even more as time passes: in my case, it has perhaps something to do with the destiny of our people. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Yet thousands and thousands of Armenians have made new homes in America—they are happy and care-free, having turned a new leaf, as the saying goes. And in your case, a brilliant physicist had been planning for your comfort and happiness. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: Everything has changed—suddenly, and

without any warning, I don't know what to say, least of all what to do . . . There is nothing to do or say. (*Producing him the letter*) Ara is dead, Levon: he has been dead for over four months: although I do not understand some of the words—(*hands him the letter*) here it is in black and white. And I never received the first one—perhaps it was lost in transit.

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*reads the letter slowly and aloud*).

“Dear Madam:

I do hope you have received in due time my first brief letter notifying you of your son's death.

It is with deepest regret that I am again writing you this letter, in the capacity of director of this laboratory where your son Ara was employed up to very recently. Due to an unfortunate accident, he died last December the fifteenth, as a result of excessive exposure to nuclear radiation. Because of war-time restrictions, we were unable to inform you fully at the time of his death. To our knowledge, he is the first American citizen to die during the course of his work in atomic research.

I am quite aware of the fact that this will come to you as a shock—as his passing was to us—since he had been actively planning for you to start a new life on these shores.

His sense of humor, cheerful disposition, and above all, devotion to duty will be missed by us all. We shall always remember him for his brilliant accomplishments as a nuclear physicist.

May I add that he remained cheerful to the very end. . . .

Please accept our heart-felt sympathy for his untimely passing.

Sincerely yours,
C. McK. Williams, Director
Los Alamos Physical Labs.”

Well, the war has ended; but you must apparently start planning anew. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: What plans? I have none. Yet—as I said a little while ago—this proposed voyage always seemed to me like something of a fairy tale. Why? I don't know the reason; it just seemed to me so unreal. The book kept me busy—if not completely happy—for so long, and this vague hope. . . . the plans of mice and men . . . A new leaf — a new life . . . Vain hopes!

PROF. LEVONIAN: The blow is a hard one—one might say with ample justification—unbearable, but who can stay fate's irresistible hand? I have myself been a wanderer for fully twenty-five years. . . . I could find no inner peace in America—nor was that fault America's; I have been back in these parts for six years or more. In your case, of course, it might have been possible to find a measure of contentment and peace with your son. Particularly if you were fortunate enough to cultivate a few compatible friends. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: Another reason, of course, was my inner desire to break away, to some extent, from the tragic past, to forget, if possible. . . . Ara once wrote me: "I'll see to it that you are happy here—and not a little proud of me." Then he added: ". . . We must defeat our base enemies, the Turks, by our culture and strides in science. . . ."

PROF. LEVONIAN: Many can, and have done that very thing. Others are cursed with relentless memories. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: And dreams . . . dreams, that pursue one mercilessly. Before I started the novel, it was a nightmare almost every night for me. How the brave Nazareth Chavoush of Zeytoune was tortured and poisoned in 1915. Nightly hangings on trumped-up-charges—yet many repeating in their last breath: "Long live Armenia!" My father-in-law was summoned to the City Hall thrice in one night to identify two dozen decapitated Armenian heads. . . . Two thousand were set afire by kerosene in one church alone like candles—indeed, human torches—after their ammunition was exhausted, and vultures descended on their helpless prey. And our allies the French would not lift a finger to help them! Indeed, they retreated like cowards in the dark of the night—without informing us—betraying us to the

enemy, even after the Turks had surrendered, hoisting white flags "Victorious" after defeat, the sight of our base enemies carrying the decapitated head of Hagop Lackian — once a member of the Turkish parliament—on a stick in the streets of Marash, in characteristic fashion—The head of the man who had entertained the French royally. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: That goes by the official name of diplomacy—and international morality! Raw materials, markets, strategic considerations, over-all interests These are supreme

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*quite upset*) Sometimes I feel like shouting before my class: Don't be misled, there is not such a thing as Christianity; human decency, international justice and morality! Diplomacy is largely the occupation of fakers whose one and only god is "INTERESTS!"—but almost always skillfully hidden under false labels such as "freedom," "justice," etc. Or else, how to explain the fate of the Armenian people. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: I must reluctantly agree with much of what you say . . . the veneer of our civilization is not very deep indeed. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: Or else how to explain the brutality of men . . . the deception and trickery . . . All is forgiven—all is forgotten—for a price. . . . But why? Therein lies a tale! But there are other things I can never forget. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: There are things it would indeed be inhuman to forget—

MRS. VARTANIAN: War. And its victims. Haig died like a hero. Vrezh and Vahagn were just victims of war—and brutality. Mr. Williams says Ara "remained cheerful to the very end." But there was a fourth one who never had the opportunity to discover why she came to this world—her stay was so brief on this planet (*She can hardly control her tears*)!

PROF. LEVONIAN: Sister Takouhi mentioned in passing that she had "perished" during the conflict in Marash.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Every time I take a look at the mountains across the sea, her picture appears before my eyes. (*She breaks down*) She was quite nice, and quiet. . . .

THE VOICE: "Methinks the Mother is too modest:
A daughter also of majestic mien,
Her mother's darling, in her infant days. . ."

(Several bars of *Anoush Hovig, Ptchetz Hooshig*, is heard on a flute).

MRS. VARTANIAN: Well, we were compelled to leave our house and take refuge in the Latin church one night . . . passing by enemy houses . . . bullets were flying thick and fast . . . it was a mile run . . . Only when we were within a few yards of the church did I realize that she was motionless . . . cold . . . and dead! Blood of my own blood, flesh of my own flesh . . . I have never—I can never—forgive myself. The guilt of her innocent blood weighs so heavily on my conscience that it chokes me during my waking hours, despite all the strength I can summon . . . By the time we reached our destination, I fully realized that I had smothered her on my own breast . . . killing my own baby—she had no name: she was not baptized yet. I had intended to name her Isabel—instead I had already killed her in my own arms . . . (she poses)

THE VOICE: (while the Voice recites this poem, the melody of Patkanian's Cradle Song is heard in the background.)

(Mother)

"Hush, hush, and sleep, my baby dear.
My love shall guard thee, year by year,
Until my rose-tree blossoms fair,
Then 'neath his shade I'll sing *oror*.

(Baby)

"Thy heart is made of stone, I see.
I wept and wept, all uselessly.
Now I shall sleep, I can't be free,
All night, all night, sing me *oror*.

MRS. VARTANIAN: . . . And she has been "sleeping" ever since.

(*There is a moment's pause, both cry bitterly, while a symphonic arrangement of Brahms' Cradle Song is played softly in the background.*) I kept it a secret from Haig . . . he never found out—since he was killed during the attack on the fortress, which he led. . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: (*deeply agitated himself*) Please compose yourself, Nvart, please. I expect nothing but fortitude from you. You have a great deal of work ahead of you—important work I can assure you. Let's remember the past, but look to the future. To right wrongs . . . I'll go get some tea for you. (*He leaves the room, Nvart dries her tears. Shortly the Professor, Sister Takouhi, Rupen and Zvart appear, with tea and biscuits.*)

PROF. LEVONIAN: Zvart had already made some tea for us all. Let's drink it.

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: Yes, it may help calm our nerves . . .

(*Nvart takes several sips, then collapses. She is taken to her bed.*)

ZVART: Poor Princess . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: She is completely exhausted.

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: She is indeed.

RUPEN: Who would not be—under similar circumstances?

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: I must spend the night here in this room. Someone should keep an eye on her . . . (*The others leave.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE III

SCENE: *The same night. A dream (this and succeeding dreams are seen by Nvart, and depict facets of her own life, except the last one, which is an historical event), showing a house in Marash in Cilicia, in late 1916. A large bay window is in the rear, cylindrical iron bars across it and a vertical one in the middle; it extends to within one yard of the floor. The top of a tin-covered bazaar can be seen right in front of it. In the distance on a hill a row of houses. Below the houses a road runs to the right corner of the stage, ending in a square. Two doors, right, lead to bedrooms. On the left side there are two corresponding doors that lead to bedrooms. A larger door, left, front is the entrance.*

AT RISE: *In the distance, the square is lit by rather bright moonlight, where a number of gallowses are seen—Armenian men hanging from them. The stage itself is indirectly lit by weak blue lights. At the base of the window is seen a flicker of light: it is a wick in a small tin can that contains oil. On cushions, in the background, are seen an old priest in his late sixties; white whiskers and mustache; wears his black robe and skull cap; a hand cane is nearby. His wife is with her daughter-in-law, who is in her late twenties. Her son, Ara, 12 is dozing off, resting his head on his mother's side. Smpad, the priest's son, in a soft and slow conversation with Minas, a neighbor, who has been hiding in this house from exile for some time. He is in his late 30's. Blue eyes: blonde mustache; his hair is definitely graying.*

PRIEST KRIKOR: They have hanged another thirty-five to-night—all innocent. O Lord, what have we done to deserve this fate. . . .

MINAS: At this rate we shall be completely destroyed—no succor in sight—The barbarians have complete freedom of action. No hope from the North, nor from the West. . . .

SMPAD: (*just recovering from a very serious sickness*) We have lived and endured for over two thousand years the night

is darkest just before dawn. . . . we will be emancipated and become free again, I am sure—long live Armenia!

MINAS: I wish to God I could share your optimism . . . but I can't. Look at the gallows . . . some day they shall find us too.

THE VOICE:

“My hair is gray, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears:
But this was for my father's faith
I suffered chains and courted death;
That father perished at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake.”

MINAS: Fundujak has fallen too. They have razed the village with cannon fire.

PRIEST KRIKOR: Stragglers are reaching the city. . . .

MINAS: I hear voices (*cupping his hand over his ear*). Cries—and fiendish laughter.

SMPAD: I do, too. My heart aches for them. . . . (*Bitter, heart-rending cries of the Armenian youths from Fundujak become louder as they are led up the street through the bazaar. Happy laughter almost drown them. Voices are heard shouting*). “Beat them on the head—brand them! Kill thegiaus! Kill them! Kill them! (*Gradually shouts and cries die down and become inaudible. The persons on the stage are dazed.*)

THE VOICE:

“In vain
Shall they strive to o'er leap the snare,
And snap the bondsman's galling chain,
In woe retrieveless lost.”

PRIEST KRIKOR: Oh Lord, You have forgotten us—forsaken us! And yet our fathers and forefathers have worshipped You and trusted in You for countless centuries—(*A loud knock is heard at the door, again and again. The old priest, getting on his*

feet with the help of his cane—he is half paralyzed—starts toward the door.) Who is there?

SEVERAL VOICES: (*and pounding on the door*) Open the door, and hurry, you traitors!

PRIEST KRIKOR: (*opening the door*) What is it that you want, at this time of the night?

THREE VOICES: (*as they enter*) You shall find out soon enough! (*The young woman quickly goes into the bedroom, rear, left, and closes the door. The boy bides in the bedroom, front, right.*)

ONE OF THE TURKS: (*all three Turks are armed with revolvers*) We have been looking for you for a long time—and all this time you have been hiding here!

MINAS: But I am innocent; I have committed no crime. . . .

ANOTHER TURK: You are all criminals!

THE THIRD TURK: (*noticing Smpad*) And *you* are back!

PRIEST KRIKOR: He came back sick—he almost died. He can hardly walk—

ONE OF THE TURKS: We will send him safely and tenderly, to Cilicia . . . and soon!

PRIEST KRIKOR: You can't take him from me . . . he is sick! (*One of the Turks slaps him on the face. The priest's wife comes to his aid*):

THE PRIEST'S WIFE, HASMIG: He is paralyzed, can't you see?

THE FIRST TURK: Stop your talk, woman!

THE SECOND TURK: Let's take them!

THE THIRD TURK: (*pointing to the bedroom where the young woman is biding*)

THE OTHER TWO: (*together*) You are so right—and bright!

THE FIRST TURK: (*Starts for the bedroom and pounds on the door*) Open the door!

PRIEST KRIKOR: You can't do this to me! (*He steps to the bay window, and cries at the top of his voice*): Neighbors, neighbors, we are being attacked, help us! Help us! For the sake of God! (*The Turks are infuriated. One of them comes and floors the priest with a couple of blows. Extinguishes the oil lamp.*)

With the two men and the young woman, they leave in a hurry, but with a final quick look out the bay window, where the outlines of the hanging men are seen, one of them says):

ONE OF THE TURKS: What a beautiful night! Allah be praised!

HASMIG: (*by the unconscious body of her husband, wiping dry his blood-stained face, and crying bitterly*) They have taken all three of them! All three of them! And they almost killed you, too! (*The blue light is gradually extinguished.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

SCENE: *The same night. Another dream. The scene takes place in a doctor's office. It is a fairly large office. At rear is a platform whereon is the doctor's desk. On the rear wall is hung his diploma. To the left is a curtain hung over the entrance to the examination room. To the left, rear, is the door to the office. There are three windows each on the right and left of the stage. Several chairs along the walls. A sink and medicine cabinet are in right, center. Further to the rear is a book case lined with books. The room is illuminated with a soft, green light.*

AT RISE: *A doctor, 70, with glasses, mustache and goatee, is sitting in his chair, reading a book. He has just opened his office.*

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: *(hearing a knock on the door)* Come in.

(A young woman in extreme mental anguish enters, bringing her young son with her. These are the same persons seen in the previous scene.)

THE YOUNG WOMAN: *(a shawl on her head and over her shoulders)* Good morning, Doctor Kalouste.

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: *(Surprised. He recognizes her readily; knows her family well.)* What brings you here in the early morning? *(To the boy, pointing to the far corner of the room)* Please go and sit on that chair, and wait for your mother. *(The boy follows instructions.)* Are you in pain?

THE YOUNG WOMAN: I would have attempted to see you earlier if I possibly could— —

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: Are you in pain?

THE YOUNG WOMAN: I do not know whether I am in pain or not— —

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: Please tell me the symptoms so that I may be of some help. . . .

THE YOUNG WOMAN: *(With tears in her eyes and trembling, softly)* Doctor, it was a nightmare—last night—we were attacked —by three ruffians. . . . death would have been preferable — —

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: Attacked?

THE YOUNG WOMAN: . . . Attacked. I came in for medication. . . .

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: (*extremely saddened*) Of course, of course! I shall do all I can; (*taking her to a chair*) Please rest here for a couple of minutes. I shall do all I can. . . .

THE YOUNG WOMAN: Please hurry, doctor, please . . .

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: (*walking toward his instrument cabinet*) Please relax for a minute. I shall be with you in a moment. (*Coming back with a hypodermic needle and a small bottle, which he puts on his desk*) Will you come up here now? (*She complies with the request.*) Now let me check your pulse and take a look at your tongue—temperature—Now I'd like to give you an injection—come with me to the rear room.

THE YOUNG WOMAN: (*pleading*) Please do all you can, doctor . . .

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: You know I will. Please follow me. (*Now they are in the rear room.*)

THE BOY: (*walking to the sink, and watching the medicine cabinet, and then looking at the doctor's diploma—to himself*) Some day I shall become a doctor, too—when my father comes back from exile. I will. I shall become a famous doctor. . . .

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: (*returning to his desk with the young woman*) Now, there is nothing to worry about. I want you to come here once a week for a month for a check-up. I'll see to it that everything turns out all right. Do not worry. Don't fail to contact me whenever you need me. Don't ever hesitate . . .

THE YOUNG WOMAN: Thank you, doctor. Thank you very much. (*To the boy*) Let us go home.

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: Please do not forget what I told you.

THE YOUNG WOMAN: Thank you again, doctor; and good-bye (*They leave*).

DOCTOR KALOUSTE: (*Sits in his chair, removes his glasses, and with his eyes fixed on the audience*) What a family—and what a fate! Her husband—a brilliant teacher and historian—in exile—and father-in-law paralyzed. . . . No one to protect her!

No one! (*Raising his face and his eyes up*) Oh, Lord, Oh, Lord, have you become blind and deaf and dumb? No compassion left in Your breast—what have we done to deserve this cruel fate? Is Your heart frozen like Your moon and petrified like Your stars? (*Pounding his hands on his desk*) What have we done to deserve this fate? What unpardonable sins have we committed, Oh, Lord? (*Brushes tears from his eyes. Illumination is gradually lowered and then extinguished.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE V

SCENE: *Same night. Still another dream. Stony hills to the left and rear of stage, where Zeytountzi* sharpshooters are stationed. To the right is the front wall of a two-story armory; the main entrance to the front, right. A Turkish flag flies atop the armory flag-pole.*

AT RISE: *The stage, which denotes distance between the warring factions is dimly illuminated by amber lights; however, the building and the hills can be clearly seen. There are a few corpses in uniform in front of the armory; as the curtain rises, rifle fire is in progress from the armory and from behind the hills. This state of affairs continues for about thirty seconds.*

VOICE FROM ARMORY: What are your conditions of surrender? (Rifle fire subsides.)

VOICE FROM THE HILLS: You haul down your flag, and hoist a white flag—a flag of surrender! and —

THE FIRST VOICE: And what else?

VOICE FROM THE HILLS: Let your Commander appear before the main gate with his subordinates, to sign instruments of unconditional surrender. And no foul play. . . .

THE FIRST VOICE: All right, all right, we accept your terms. (The level of illumination is raised. The armory door opens. The officers appear, as stipulated. From the passage in front, left Bishop Bartholomew appears, in his formal cleric's garb, with a cross hanging from his neck. A sword at his right side. Six Zeytountzis follow him, in native garb, and fully armed, led by Prince Sorenian.)

BISHOP BARTHOLOMEW: (walks to the officers and is saluted by them) Here are the papers.

COMMANDER: (reads the papers and signs them, and hands them to the Bishop, who puts them in his inside coat pocket.) We are ready, Keshish Effendi.†

*Zeytountzis — natives of Zeytoune.

†Keshish — cleric. Effendi — a title of courtesy among the Turks.

PRINCE SOURENIAN: (*to Bishop Bartholomew*) I am fully satisfied now, Bishop Bartholomew.

BISHOP BARTHOLOMEW: Now, Officer, you must surrender your six hundred men and all their arms, in compliance with our demands; I shall see to it that your troops are fed and sheltered. Now the flag. . . . (*one of the Bishop's body guards hands him the flag of Zeytoune, who in turn hands it to the Commanding Officer. The Commanding Officer in turn hands it to one of his inferiors in rank. In a moment the Turkish flag is hauled down and the flag of Zeytoune is hoisted on the flag-pole.*) Surrender your side arms! Now, salute the flag of Zeytoune! (*They all salute, as a male chorus in the background starts singing excerpts from Ipolitoff-Ivanoff's Caucasian Sketches—Zeytountzi Yenk, Katcher Ounink . . . which continues during the remainder of this scene. The soldiers start filing out of the armory, one by one, salute the Bishop, pass under his sword which is raised at a diagonal angle at the main gate. They leave their arms and ammunition by the body-guards, walk diagonally across the stage, and out by the passage way in rear, left. Several armed Zeytountzis emerge from left, front, and start carrying the arms behind the hills.*)

COMMANDER: The bodies, Effendi. . . .

BISHOP BARTHOLOMEW: (*to the officers*) As you were! Now have those bodies carried away!

VOICES BEHIND THE HILLS: Victory! Victory! Victory after five hundred years! Let the Lord be praised! Halleluiah! Halleluiah! Long live Zeytoune!

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

SCENE I

SCENE: *Mrs. Vartanian's bedroom. Several days later. It is a bright morning, about 10 o'clock.*

AT RISE: *Mrs. Vartanian, in nightgown, hair well groomed, cuts a beautiful figure. She is finishing breakfast—tea, cheese and bread.*

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*In about 20 to 30 seconds she finishes her breakfast. Lights up a cigarette and then crushes it. Goes to piano and plays portions of the following: Tchaikovsky's None But the Lonely Heart, Andante Cantabile and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2. To herself—rising and facing the audience.*) Well, Nvart, the time for another decision is here at hand—what are you going to do? What CAN you do? Submit to the tyranny of the dream-nightmares that certainly will rear their ugly heads, or take a course that befits a fighting individual—though the odds are against you? What are your goals now? Heaven knows there are many subjects that can be attempted in the literary field—but have you got the strength—and the incentive—and the hope to continue? Have you? The morning is bright and warm—yet I feel tired and there is no glimmer of hope in my heart. Well, let's go back to the ancients for a minute—(She recites):

“Ye syrens, winged daughters of the earth,
Come and attune the sympathetic string,
Expressive now no more of mirth,
To soothe my griefs, the flute of Cilicia bring;
Record the tortures which this bosom rend,
And echo back my elegiac strains:

Proserpine next will evoke, to send
Numbers adapted to her votary pains;
So shall her dark abode, while many a tear I shed,
Waft the full dirge to soothe th' illustrious dead."

(*An unexpected knock is heard at the door.*) Yes—who is it?

ABBESS TAKOUHI: This is Abbess Takouhi.

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*starting for the door*) Come right in, Sister Takouhi. (*The Abbess is led to the table.*) I hope you will excuse me—the table is not even cleaned. I had a late breakfast. You can see, I am not even dressed.

ABBESS TAKOUHI: That's quite all right, Mrs. Vartanian. I just came in to see how you are doing.

MRS. VARTANIAN: As well as can be expected under the circumstances, Sister Takouhi.

ABBESS TAKOUHI: Yes, of course, Mrs. Vartanian, I have been thinking about you for some time. However, I have hesitated to discuss personal problems, not knowing exactly what your personal reaction would be. Not advice, mind you. What I had in mind was an exchange of opinion, say, between an elder sister and a younger one. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: Yes, of course, Sister Takouhi. Indeed, I am grateful for your personal interest in me—

ABBESS TAKOUHI: Simply stated, and in view of the changed circumstances, are you considering marriage in your plans? I am a woman—and a nun. But you are free. A happy marriage may very well spur you to greater effort in your chosen field—and provide you with the companionship every woman craves.

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*blushing somewhat*) Truthfully, the idea has occurred to me—to say no, would be untrue. But—

ABBESS TAKOUHI: I was thinking, that is, what we have seen of Prof. Levonian—he might make a rather acceptable candidate. And you have so much in common. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: I have always admired him as a man—but marriage is in a category by itself. . . .

ABBESS TAKOUHI: And he is rather handsome, I think. More

important, of course, his wonderful Armenian nationalism and his deep interest in literature

MRS. VARTANIAN: Yes, his interest in literature . . . My "THE ARMENIAN CALVARY" was intended to encompass the whole of great events in a general way. The stories of Marash, Zeytoune, Hadjin, Aintab and Ourfa certainly merit individual volumes. . . . I have already considerable raw materials on them. Indeed, there is a life-time of work ahead for a steadfast soul . . .

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: They certainly do—and you are the one to do it, my dear Nvart. Well, I must go back (*Looks at her watch*) I have an appointment in about five minutes. In the meantime, I do hope you will give some serious consideration to my suggestion, (*she rises*).

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*rising*) Thank you very much for your visit, Sister Takouhi. We shall await and see what time will bring.

ABBESS TAKOUEHI: (*at the door with Mrs. Vartanian*) Good things, I pray to God, my dear. And let's not forget the saying: "Man proposes, God disposes." So long for now.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Thank you again for stopping in, Sister Takouhi.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

SCENE: *The garden, several weeks later. About 12 o'clock noon. It is a warm sunny day.*

AT RISE: *Prof. Levonian is busily engaged in translating "THE ARMENIAN CALVARY" from the Armenian to English. There are stacks of papers, pen and pencils on the table, as well as several dictionaries. The Professor is all by himself, checking the exact meaning of a word by consulting the dictionaries.*

PROF. LEVONIAN: *(to himself)* Now I am satisfied; the exact shading of the word is "flippant," nothing else. Of course the professionals realize, in fact know from bitter experience—having burnt their fingers more than once—that translating one language into another, precisely, with all the shadings implicit in the original, and the idioms used, is one of the most difficult tasks one can face. Indeed, it is an art and an exact science at the same time, and —

RUPEN: *(enters the garden, and heads towards the Professor)*
Baron Levonian, I hate to interrupt your work, but may I have a word with you?

PROF. LEVONIAN: What is it, Rupen?

RUPEN: I know you are extremely busy: but I wish to ask you a question that is very important to me. Perhaps you have observed, I am desperately in love with Zvart. But my father insists that I should continue my schooling—I am already a graduate of a Junior High School—as I have mentioned before—and furthermore, I have already studied accounting, and I honestly believe I can handle, and with competence, my father's work. Now the question is: do you really think I need further schooling?

PROF. LEVONIAN: Well, if you shy away from books and such—perhaps you know the saying: you can lead a horse to water . . . there is however, no sense in wasting time. You should perhaps spend some more time on your specialty—and

gain some practical experience. I do believe, I must add, that you have enough sense to see to it that you do.

ZVART: (*entering the garden with her garden implements*)

Hello, Baron Levonian. It is a gorgeous day.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Being a warm-hearted man, I love this kind of weather. Such days are productive indeed!

ZVART: (*Rupen watches her; he thinks that he is being ignored*)

They sure are! (*Having filled her water pail, she goes to one corner of the garden.*)

RUPEN: That is all I wanted to know. Thank you very much.

There may be another topic or two on which I may need your advice, but —

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*entering the garden*) Hello, Professor Levonian. I can see you have been busy this morning.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Yes, I have been quite busy. The first chapter is almost finished. Forty-one more to go. And then, of course, there will be corrections and proof-reading to be done, etc. I like to maintain this pace.

RUPEN: Will you excuse me? I like to help Zvart with her gardening.

LEVON AND NVART: (*in unison*) Of course.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Nvart, as you know, I came to this Island on a more or less routine tour of duty. But so much has happened in so short a time—my life is completely changed. And I have made a definite decision—

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*somewhat hesitatingly*) May I ask what it may be?

PROF. LEVONIAN: Of course, you may. I have decided to accept the permanent assignment offered me on this beautiful Island on a condition. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: I don't quite understand . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: Well, let me put it this way: do you think we could—you and I—start a new life here together? There is so much to do. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: Well, the question is so sudden. . . . I have not had a chance to think or do anything, especially during the last several weeks, as you well know. . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: I do. But I must answer to Headquarters within ten days, so they can act accordingly. I think as a team we could be quite productive, and very happy. At any rate, I have as of this moment, decided to spend the rest of my life on this Island . . . with you!

MRS. VARTANIAN: I have not considered marriage seriously for some years; but, my plans and circumstances have radically changed. Perhaps I should . . . But that certainly will take time.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Will you please give some very serious consideration to my proposal? I know we could be very happy together.

ZVART: (*coming toward Mrs. Vartanian*) Princess, may I ask you something very confidential and very special?

MRS. VARTANIAN: If you wish to, you are quite welcome, Zvart.

ZVART: Could I, that is, if someone asked me to marry him, and if I loved him, and if the same situation existed for you: could we all be married at the same time and in one ceremony? I would love that—and I would feel so confident of the future. . . .

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*smiling*) Zvart, there are so many "ifs" in that sentence, well, my answer would be "if."

ZVART: (*addressing Nvart*) Will you come with me for a minute, please? I would like to make some lemonade for the Professor. It's quite warm, and he has been working so hard all morning. (*They excuse themselves and leave the garden.*)

RUPEN: (*heading toward the Professor. He is quite stirred and blushing.*) Professor, she promised: she is going to marry me!

PROF. LEVONIAN: Let me be the first to congratulate you. She is a sweet girl indeed.

RUPEN: Thank you. I am thrilled! She will make a wonderful wife . . . I always loved her . . .

PROF. LEVONIAN: You are lucky.

RUPEN: May I be allowed to put in a personal word, if I may . . . You have lost your wife and children, and never re-married. I was thinking, now that the circumstances have changed, you and the Princess . . . She is tops. Confidentially, I have been acting as Mr. Torrossian's special courier for the last two years.

Every time I went to the City, he gave me a letter for her. And tipped me generously for it. But, I think they live in two entirely different worlds, and --

ZVART: (*and Nvart, return; they have changed clothes, fixed up their hair, etc.*) Here we are back with some cool refreshment.

PROF. LEVONIAN: I appreciate it very much. Thank you both for your thoughtfulness. By the way, Mrs. Vartanian, have you congratulated the newly betrothed couple.

MRS. VARTANIAN: Zvart confided in me. Rupen is a very lucky young man.

RUPEN: Thank you.

PROF. LEVONIAN: Rupen also suggested—in a top-secret fashion—that maybe I should also think in similar terms. Well, I am looking forward toward the future with considerable hope, and expectations of genuine happiness. All one can do is—hope!

MRS. VARTANIAN: (*reflecting for a few seconds*) There may be considerable merit in Rupen's suggestion. . . . (*The two couples, arm in arm, walk happily forward slowly. Rupen and Zvart kiss; as Levon and Nvart embrace, a symphonic arrangement of the "September Song" bursts forth from behind the stage.*)

CURTAIN

THE END

About the Author

Born and raised in Cilicia, H. H. Haig came to the U.S. in the early 1920s and continued his education at American universities. A former radio technician, he is an engineer who holds an FCC license as a radio-telephone operator first class, with radar endorsement. Professionally and as a hobby, he has spent much time in electronics experimentation.

Mr. Haig's writings have appeared in technical publications and his short stories in weekly magazines. His first published play, *The First Genocide*, was based on his memories of the Armenian tragedy. The author currently makes his home in New Jersey.



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(Continued on back flap)

(Continued from front flap)

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